

Government Administration and Elections Committee

Chairs and members of the Committee,

My name is Victoria Usher and I live in Glastonbury. I am here today because I am concerned about the integrity of our elections and I wish to voice my support of HB-6441. I have worked at the polls for the last 4 elections, including as a moderator and assistant registrar. I have also been a volunteer observer for the last four elections for the Connecticut Citizen Election Audit Coalition. Those experiences bring me here to testify today.

The main aspect of the audits that I will address is the chain of custody requirement. A very weak link in election integrity is the transport and storage of ballots after elections. Common sense would require, at minimum, that no single person be able to access the ballots alone at any time.

While working at one of the polling places I saw that the ballots were transported back to the storage facility by only one assistant registrar-not the required two. While observing audits my recall in two cases is that the transfer of ballots to and from the audit did not involve two people of different parties, and in fact, did not involve two people at all. Also, inquiries of registrars during the election audits of two large municipalities led me to conclude that ballots were stored under a single lock and key where both of the registrars had access; that access did not necessitate both registrars be present. Unless they have two different keys to two different locks, each could access the ballots alone. In many towns surveyed by the Coalition, there is one key and everyone on the registrar's staff has access to the ballots.

Another issue regarding ballot storage involves the ballot bags themselves. As a moderator in one election I accidentally left something out of a bag that I had already sealed. I was getting ready to break the seal when another worker suggested we might be able to squeeze it in. What a surprise when she pulled the two sides of the bag and it almost completely opened-with the seal securely in place. What we discovered is that if you thread the seal through the large holes of the zipper tabs-which is where everyone threads it- you have complete access to the bags. The seal has to be threaded through the smaller holes on the zipper itself to be effective.

In closing let me say that the biggest impediment to secure elections is complacency. People want to do the right thing but they just don't think we have a problem and therefore it's not that important to follow these 'unnecessary' rules. They think it can't happen here. Unfortunately anyone who cares to look into it will find that there is plenty of evidence of potential fraud, actual fraud and just plain errors involving electronic voting. Do I think there has been any fraud in our state? No, I don't, but when I think of the close race between Rob Simmons and Joe Courtney and all that was riding on it I would say we would be crazy to think that it couldn't happen here.

Please pass HB-6441 to improve the security of our elections.

Respectfully,

Victoria Usher
81 Hale Road
Glastonbury, CT 06033